DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 052 251 TM 000 657

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TITLE Student Evaluation of the Television Course "Using Tests Intelligently."
PUB DATE Feb 71
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, New York, February 1971

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Course Evaluation, Educational Testing, Education Courses, Evaluation Methods, *Questionnaires, Student Testing, Teacher Education, *Telecourses, *Televised Instruction, *Testing

ABSTRACT

The results of a student evaluation of a television course on tests and measurements offered by the Extension Service, California State College, Los Angeles, California, are presented. The evaluation form, which was general in nature, was completed by 157 students who finished the course. Questions asked were: (1) How did you find out about the course? (2) What is your occupation? (3) How useful was the course in general? (4) How helpful was the textbook? (5) How helpful were the unit tests? (6) What did you like best about the course? (7) How could the course have been improved? (8) How difficult was the course? (9) Would you enroll for another course of this design in the field of education and psychology? (10) What other television courses do you wish to be offered? Tables summarizing the student responses and a discussion of the data are presented in the document. Results demonstrated that the course was well received and perceived as a useful learning experience. Problems in future presentation of the course are also discussed. (AE)

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STUDENT EVALUATION OF THE TELEVISION COURSE "USING TESTS INTELLIGENTLY"

The television course, "Using Tests Intelligently", was recorded by the Broadcast Service Center, California State College, Los Angeles, in the latter part of 1969, and the tapes are now available for use. The course was initially broadcast over KABC-TV (Los Angeles) for 40 half-hour lessons at 6:30 AM beginning February 16, 1970. There were five lessons a week and the course continued for eight weeks. The course was offered under the auspices of the Extension Service, California State College, Los Angeles, and provided four quarter units of upper division credit under the college catalog designation, Education 409: Educational Tests and Measurements.

The TV lessons are relaxed and informal but carefully structured. Each lesson begins with a listing of objectives stated in behavioral terms. At the conclusion of each lesson, students answer a series of short objective review questions presented on the TV screen followed by a listing of correct responses. Supplementary information is supplied to students through assignments in a textbook especially prepared for use in the course.

In the initial presentation of the course, students were required to take four unit tests on Saturdays at conveniently located test centers. As soon as the students handed in their answer sheets at the test centers, they were given answer keys providing not only a

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listing of correct responses, but also code designations to indicate textbook readings covering each item. Students were permitted to keep the test booklets for further study. In this manner, students were given immediate feedback of test results with an opportunity for studying areas of weakness. At the conclusion of the course, students were administered a final summary test and also at that time filled out an unsigned student evaluation form which has provided the basis for this evaluation.

An innovative feature of the course was the use of a computer-based item storage and retrieval system which helped make it convenient to develop numerous forms of each test so that students experiencing difficulty on particular tests could be given opportunities to repeat parallel forms of the same tests. With this system, most conscientious students were able to pass all tests. The sequence followed was test - study - retest, etc. until a passing level of achievement was reached. Most students, of course, were able to pass the test on the first try. However, the knowledge that they would be retested if necessary helped relieve anxiety and, the instructor believes, led to more effective test performance by students.

Altogether 172 students enrolled for the initial presentation of the course, but eight of these officially dropped. Another seven were given unofficial withdrawals because they missed several tests and indicated no wish to make these up. Thus, altogether 157 students or 91 percent of those originally enrolled, finished the course.

Distribution of grades for the course was as follows:

A -- 59 (38 percent)

B -- 87 (55 percent)

C -- 11 (7 percent)

D -- 0

F -- 0

The evaluation form provided students with an opportunity to respond to the following questions:

1. How did you find out about the course?
2. What is your occupation?
3. How useful was the course in general?
4. How helpful was the textbook?
5. How helpful were the unit tests?
6. What did you like most about the course?
7. How could the course have been most improved?
8. How difficult was the course?
9. Would you enroll for another course of this design in the field of education and psychology?
10. What other television courses do you wish to be offered?

The next sections will provide tables summarizing the student answers to each question. After each table there will be a brief discussion of the data.

1. How did students find out about the course? (146 students responding)

57% A. Given brochure at school

12% B. TV Announcement

10% C. Informed by friend

9% D. Informed by school official

6% E. Picked up brochure in public library

4% F. Read about it in College Extension Service Bulletin

2% G. Other (Newspaper articles, informed by course instructor, etc.)

A systematic and intensive effort was made to inform prospective students of the course. Initially, the course was announced in the regular College Extension Service Bulletin, which was sent to a majority of the schools in Los Angeles County and bordering areas together with several descriptive brochures for each school. Thereafter, the TV instructor made a personal telephone call to each school district, described the course to the director of curriculum and arranged for widespread distribution of the brochures to individual teachers. Additionally, all the public libraries in Los Angeles County were supplied with brochures. In this manner, approximately 25,000 brochures were distributed.

Several newspaper articles describing the course were published, including a feature article in the South Bay Daily Breeze, a newspaper in the South Los Angeles area with approximately 60,000 subscribers. The television station KABC-TV was helpful in publicizing the course.

For the week preceding the course, four or five brief spot announcements were given daily and the announcements continued through the first 10 days of the course.

Despite these efforts to publicize the course, the total enrollment was not large. The most effective means of communication with prospective students apparently was through distribution of the descriptive brochures to the school. This distribution was materially assisted by school personnel whose help was solicited through telephone calls by the television instructor.

As part of the evaluation form, students were asked to write their ideas, if any, as to why more students did not enroll in the class. Relatively few responded to this question. Several mentioned that some prospective students were afraid to take the course because they feared it might be too mathematical. Others mentioned that many persons were probably reluctant to give up the four Saturday mornings to take the unit tests required in the course. Although the cost ($57.85) was mentioned by only a very few as a reason for not taking the course, the instructor suspects that this was an important factor in limiting enrollment.

It should be added that the instructor is aware of a number of persons who viewed the course regularly even though they were not officially enrolled. In one school district, a group of teachers met several times to discuss the content of particular lessons. No doubt there were others of whom the instructor is not personally aware who became interested in the course and viewed it regularly.

2. What were the student's occupations? (134 responding)

72% A. Teachers

17% B. Preparing to become teachers

6% C. Housewives

5% D. Others (Social Worker, Registered Nurse, Employment Counselor, Students)

It is evident that the course was of prime attraction to teachers and those planning to become teachers.

3. How useful was the course in general? (146 responding)

36% A. Extremely useful

43% B. Very useful

19% C. Somewhat useful

2% D. Not very useful

0% E. A waste of time

A large majority of the students found the course very or extremely useful. A number of students wrote enthusiastic letters in support of the course, made encouraging phone calls, and engaged in personal conversations with the TV instructor indicating strong approval. Of the 146 students, only three rated the course as "not very useful" and none rated it a "waste of time".

4. How helpful was the textbook? (146 responding)

46% A. Extremely helpful

46% B. Very helpful

8% C. Somewhat helpful

0% D. Not very helpful

0% E. Useless

Many favorable comments about the textbook were made to the instructor: The statement of objectives at the beginning of each chapter, the careful organization of content, the simple style and the use of two sets of practice questions in each chapter coded to specific paragraphs were specifically mentioned as adding to the value of the textbook as a learning aid.

5. How helpful were the unit tests?

58% A. Extremely helpful

33% B. Very helpful

8% C. Somewhat helpful

1% D. Not very helpful

0% E. Useless

Although a few students at the beginning of the course complained about the requirements of taking the four unit tests on Saturdays, it appears that this was one of the most popular features of the course. The unit tests provided immediate feedback to students regarding their progress, and indicated needed areas for review. The fact that students were permitted to repeat tests on which they did poorly probably helped relieve the anxiety often associated with test taking. Apparently, as a result of the course, tests began to be perceived as learning aids - not threats. A number of teachers stated that the testing procedures of the course changed their whole outlook on appropriate uses of tests, and they were finding in their own classrooms that using tests as learning aids not only improved class morale,

but also seemed to lead to better student achievement. The instructor believes that the most significant feature of the course is that it provides a model of how, in fact, tests really can be used with primary emphasis on helping students learn.

6. What did the students like most about the course? (117 responding)

The following list represents an attempt to summarize the general sense of the desired features of the course according to student opinion. Several of the students listed more than one aspect as being most liked in the course. The numbers in the list do not represent percent, but the actual number of those responding.

34 A. Convenience

31 B. Testing with immediate feedback.

30 C. TV instructor's method of presentation (informal atmosphere, visual aids, etc.)

21 D. The careful structure of each lesson beginning with a listing of objectives which is repeated at the conclusion of the lesson.

14 E. The attempts to lessen anxiety about tests.

12 F. The originality of the ideas about testing.

4 G. The fact that the instructor practices what he preaches in the course.

4 H. Instructor's availability to answer questions over the telephone.

3 I. Feeling of being individually tutored.

2 J. Repetition of difficult points.

1 K. Opportunity to work independently.

1 L. The textbook

1 M. The short length of each lesson.

On the basis of these comments, it appears that a course can be carefully planned, follow a fixed structure and still be perceived by the student as an informal and pleasant experience. Students seemed to feel that they were being treated with appropriate personal consideration, and probably more so than in the typical classroom lecture situation. It seems clear also that the course was presented so that tests were perceived as learning aids and not threats.

7. How could the course have been improved? (77 responding)

The following list attempts to summarize ideas for improving the course. Several students listed more than one response as to how they would like to see the course improved. The numbers do not represent percents, but the actual number of those making each suggestion.

30 A. Present course materials more slowly, particularly concepts relating to quantitative aspects of measurement.

10 B. Have more opportunity for meeting with instructor for discussion and questions.

9 C. Have course at a later hour.

7 D. Provide more examples on applied use of measurement in the classroom.

6 E. Have unit tests printed so as to be more legible.

5 F. Present course in a more dynamic manner.

3 G. Provide supplementary materials explaining more difficult points.

3 H. Have less emphasis on the instructor's personal opinions.

2 I. Get textbooks mailed out to the students sooner.

1 J. Make testing and grading less threatening.

1 K. Give the final exam in a room which is quieter and where there are fewer distractions.

1 L. Require the instructor to be less optimistic about everyone passing.

1 M. Give fewer tests.

1 N. Have students take all unit tests by mail.

1 O. Avoid so much use of the word "necessarily" both in the television presentation and in the textbook.

As may be seen from the list, quite a few of the students suggested a slower pace for the course. The instructor, in planning the course, intended it to be "meaty". It was anticipated that students

would find it necessary to study and review some aspects of the course independently. This seems appropriate for a senior-graduate level course. However, the instructor does believe it highly desirable that one of the lessons in particular should be redone because of the overly rapid pace of presentation.

The suggestion that students have more opportunity to meet with the instructor for discussion and questions is one that is often made for television courses. Although the instructor highly favors providing students with this kind of opportunity, his experience in other TV courses suggests that such discussions are not well attended on a voluntary basis either because of problems of scheduling discussions at a convenient time, or because of lack of student interest.

The suggestion that the course be given at a later hour is probably not a very good one because for a great majority of the students 6:30 AM is likely the most convenient time. However, if it were possible, showing the same lesson at a later hour in the day would be useful, and particularly so for the students who might want to see the same lesson twice.

The instructor believes that the suggestion to provide more examples in the applied use of measurement in the curriculum is a good one, and would like to prepare four or five additional lessons in the course for this purpose.

An obvious problem in the course was that some of the unit tests were printed so light as to be difficult to read. This will be easy to correct in future course presentations.

The general suggestion that the course be presented in a more dynamic manner summarizes several individual suggestions such as: more interesting visual aids should be used, the instructor should tell more jokes, and so forth.

The rest of the suggested improvements have been made either by very few individuals or single individuals and, for the most part, are probably not significant.

8. How difficult was the course? (146 responding) In this case, responses are given as percents.

4% A. Very difficult

37% B. Difficult

56% C. Of average difficulty

3% D. Easy

0% E. Very easy

These ratings are consistent with the instructor's perception of what might be the expected level of difficulty of a course of this type for state college students at the senior - graduate level.

9. Would students enroll for another course of this type?

52% A. Definitely yes

34% B. Probably yes

10% C. Undecided

3% D. Probably not

1% E. Definitely not

Although it is obviously uncertain whether or not students would actually enroll for another course if offered, the response to this question seems to indicate a generally favorable attitude toward television instruction of the type presented.

10. What other television courses would students like to be offered? (70 responding) The following is a list of courses under general categories suggested by the students. Several students listed more than one course. The numbers on the list represent actual numbers responding rather than percent.

Education (General)

11 A. Any education course which could be used toward meeting certification requirements.

6 B. Diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties.

5 C. Teaching the culturally deprived.

3 D. Curriculum planning.

2 E. Handling student behavior problems.

2 F. Psychological or sociological foundations of education.

Education (Specific subject fields)

12 A. Teaching reading.

7 B. Mathematics

7 C. History

4 D. Literature

2 E. English as a second language.

2 F. Science

2 G. Art

Psychology, Counseling, and Guidance (A variety of courses)

17 A. Psychology

10 B. Counseling and Guidance

6 C. Advanced courses in testing.

The fact that most of the courses listed here are in education or related fields is consistent with the fact that most of those taking the course were teachers or planning to become teachers. It would be pointed out that only 70 responded to this question, and it is the instructor's impression that the responses were generally "off the cuff" and did not represent careful considerations of possible desired courses.

Future Presentation of the Course

Results of the questionnaire demonstrate that the course was well received and perceived as a useful learning experience. The course provided a practical demonstration how use of well defined goals, carefully organized presentations with as much student involvement as possible, and appropriate feedback combine to provide an effective instructional procedure. Many of the students reported that the course provided a model presentation for modifying their own teaching methods to advantage.

As is well known, there is currently considerable interest in education in improving use of tests as learning aids and as a means for encouraging teacher accountability for student success. Considering the current significance of course content, the general success of the course, and the amount of effort and other resources devoted to its development, the instructor highly recommends further use of the course.

The instructor is well aware that although many will agree with the desirability of additional presentations of the course, it will probably be difficult to secure approval and adequate financial

support for further uses. Although the cost of using the video tape is not especially high, and may be negotiated with the Broadcast Service Center, California State College, Los Angeles, current systems of budget allocations in various educational institutions often do not provide for convenient methods of support. Furthermore, achieving approval by faculty for course presentation may often be a very time consuming process. However, if in fact, use of the course constitutes a significant educational advance, then it does appear desirable to find means for overcoming the obvious "roadblocks" with reasonable dispatch and moving ahead to additional presentations of the course.

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June 1970